

**Technical Panel
of the
Nebraska Information Technology Commission**

Wednesday, March 12, 2003 - 9:00 a.m.
Varner Hall - Board Room
38th and Holdrege, Lincoln, Nebraska

AGENDA

Meeting Documents:

Click the links in the agenda
or [click here](#) for all documents (459 KB)

1. Roll Call and Meeting Notice
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of Minutes* - [February 12, 2003](#)
4. HIPAA Presentation
5. Project Reviews*

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND
- [Public Safety Wireless Project](#)

COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY FUND
- [CTF Special Project](#)

6. Comments from the Technical Panel to the Public Service Commission on Distance Learning*

[Draft Comments](#)

7. Regular Informational Items and Work Group Updates (as needed)

- Accessibility Architecture Work Group
- CAP
- CAP - Technical (NAWG)
- CAP - Policy
- Security Architecture Work Group
- Statewide Synchronous Video Network Work Group
- Wireless Project
- NIS

8. Other Business

9. Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

10. Adjourn

* Denotes Action Items

Meeting notice posted to the NITC Website: 14 FEB 2003

Meeting notice posted to the [Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar](#): 14 FEB 2003

Agenda posted to the NITC Website: 7 MAR 2003

TECHNICAL PANEL

Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Wednesday, February 12, 2003, 9:00 a.m.
Varner Hall, 3835 Holdrege, Lincoln, NE

PROPOSED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brenda Decker, Department of Administrative Services
Christy Horn, University of Nebraska, Compliance Officer
Kirk Langer, Lincoln Public Schools, K-12 Representative
Rick Becker (Alt. for Steve Schafer, Chief Information Officer, State of Nebraska)
Walter Weir, University of Nebraska

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Beach, Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gene Hand, Public Service Commission

Mr. Hand informed the Technical Panel about the Public Service Commission's Open Docket C-2874/PI-71 which is seeking to investigate the current status of distance learning in Nebraska. Written comments must be filed on or before March 7, 2003. A public workshop is scheduled for March 18, 2003, at 2:00 p.m. CST in the Commission Library, 300 The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Lincoln. Mr. Hand requested that the Technical Panel provide comments. Mr. Weir also recommended that the Education Council provide comments from the functional aspect. The docket is on the Education Council's agenda for the February 21st meeting.

Members suggested that the Technical Panel send a letter to the Public Service Commission requesting an extension to March 13th or 14th for written comments. Technical Panel comments will be an agenda item at the next meeting on March 12th. The following members will meet with representatives of the Education Council to develop written comments: Christy Horn, Kurt Langer, and Walter Weir. Mike Beach was also recommended.

Roger Hahn, Nebraska Information Network

Mr. Hahn distributed two maps: Telephony K-12 Data Network and CDLEC ATM Network. Members discussed distance learning issues with Mr. Hahn.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8TH MINUTES

Ms. Decker moved to approve the [January 8th minutes](#) as presented. Ms. Horn seconded. Roll call vote: Decker-Yes, Horn-Yes, Langer-Yes, Becker-Yes, and Weir-Yes. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

DIRECTORY SERVICES PROJECT

Steve Henderson, Kevin Keller, Steve Hartman and Jerry Hielen
Information Management Services

Staff of IMServices provided a presentation entitled "[Nebraska Directory Services](#)". The vision of Nebraska Directory Services project is to implement single signon using role based authentication and authorization for electronic government (e-Government) to provide for a cost effective, efficient delivery of services, while maintaining necessary security and confidentiality of non-public information through an industry standard enterprise directory. Items presented were the benefits, the project's roadmap and toolset, integration, standards, work group sessions, the role of the State Government Council and the NITC, costs, what's being done in the project so far and what remains to be done. The project's website is <https://guardian.ims.state.ne.us>

Mr. Weir invited the IMServices staff to the University's I.T. Directors meeting to be held on February 20th.

STATE RECORDS BOARD PROJECT REVIEWS

[UN Coop Extension](#)

Ms. Decker moved that the Technical Panel, having reviewed the grant application entitled “Access eGovernment,” finds that: There are no technical elements of this project to review. Mr. Becker seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Weir-Yes, Becker-Yes, Langer-Yes, Horn-Yes, and Decker-Yes. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

[CIO Interaction Licensing Phase III](#)

Ms. Horn moved to pass a resolution that the Technical Panel having reviewed the grant application entitled “Business Portal Phase II,” finds that: The project is technically feasible; the proposed technology is appropriate for the project; and the technical elements can be accomplished within the proposed time frame and budget. Mr. Weir seconded the motion. After discussion, Ms. Decker offered a friendly amendment to the motion. Ms. Horn and Mr. Weir accepted.

The motion reads as follows: “The Technical Panel, having reviewed the grant application entitled 'Interactive Licensing Phase III,' finds that: Based on the completion of previous phases of the project, we believe the applicant possesses the technical ability to complete Phase III. Roll call vote: Horn-Yes, Langer-Yes, Becker-Abstained, Weir-Yes, and Decker-Yes. The motion was carried by majority vote.

UPDATES

Wireless, Brenda Decker. No report.

Network, Brenda Decker. No report.

Collaborative Aggregation Partnership (CAP), Brenda Decker. A meeting with providers is scheduled for tomorrow. Ms. Decker and Mr. Weir will be providing a presentation so that everyone receives the same information. In addition, the providers will be given the opportunity to meet individually with CAP. Mr. Weir introduced Amy Stephen, who has been working on the database update to the TINA Study data. Ms. Stephen will work with NITC IT Managers and will plan to attend Education Council and Community Council meetings to present the database and get input on how to update information. She will also attend the ESU Network Operations Committee meeting on February 19th.

Mr. Golden provided an update on the College Park project. When the project is completed, Mr. Weir suggested that the NITC do a ceremony ribbon cutting event to promote public awareness.

Statewide Synchronous Video Network Work Group. Mr. Rolfes distributed a list of nominees to serve on the Work Group that will be presented to the Education Council at the February meeting. The Council will vote on these recommendations to be approved by the Technical Panel.

Accessibility, Christy Horn. The work group continues to work on developing training.

Security, Steve Schafer. Mr. Schafer was not available for a report.

NIS, Tom Conroy. Mr. Conroy was not available to report. Mr. Becker stated that go-live for financials is scheduled for March 1st.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Henderson indicated that IMServices is working on a network security document to be reviewed by the panel at a future meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Horn moved to adjourn. Ms. Decker seconded. All were in favor. The motion was carried by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m. The next meeting of the NITC Technical Panel will be held on Wednesday, March 12th, Varner Hall, 3835 Holdrege in Lincoln.

Meeting minutes were taken by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by Rick Becker of the Office of the CIO/NITC.

Nebraska Information Technology Commission

Project Proposal Form

**Funding Requests
For Information Technology Projects**

Information Technology Infrastructure Fund

FY2002-03

Project Title	Statewide Public Safety Wireless System Project
Agency/Entity	CIO on behalf of the Statewide Communications Alliance of Nebraska (SCAN)

**Project Proposal Form
FY2003-05 Biennium**

About this form...

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission (“NITC”) is required by statute to “make recommendations on technology investments to the Governor and the Legislature, including a prioritized list of projects, reviewed by the technical panel, for which new or additional funding is requested.” In order to perform this review, the NITC and DAS-Budget Division require agencies/entities to complete this form when requesting new or additional funding for technology projects. For more information, see the document entitled “Guidance on Information Technology Related Budget Requests” available at <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/forms/>.

Electronic versions of this form are available at <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/forms/>.

For questions or comments about this form, contact the Office of the CIO/NITC at:

Mail: Office of the CIO/NITC
521 S 14th Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 471-3560
Fax: (402) 471-4608
E-mail: info@cio.state.ne.us

Submission of Form

Completed forms must be submitted by the same date biennial budget requests are required to be submitted to the DAS Budget Division. Completed project proposal forms must be submitted via e-mail to info@cio.state.ne.us. The project proposal form should be submitted as an attachment in one of these formats: Microsoft Word; WordPerfect; Adobe PDF; or Rich Text Format. Receipt of the form by the Office of the CIO will be confirmed by e-mail. If an agency is unable to submit the application as described, contact the Office of the CIO prior to the deadline, to make other arrangements for submitting a project proposal form.

Section I: General Information

Project Title	Statewide Public Safety Wireless System Project
Agency (or entity)	CIO on behalf of the Statewide Communications Alliance of Nebraska (SCAN)

Contact Information for this Project:

Name	Steven Schafer, CIO
Address	Executive Bldg., 521 S. 14 th St., Ste. 200
City, State, Zip	Lincoln, NE, 68508 – 2707
Telephone	(402) 471-4385
E-mail Address	slscafe@notes.state.ne.us

**Project Proposal Form
FY2003-05 Biennium**

Section II: Executive Summary

In 2002, the Legislature passed legislation (LB 1211), which permitted creation of “joint entity pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act.” The joint entity would have the power to operate, maintain and manage a statewide seamless wireless communications system pursuant to Section 86-414.

The Governor has appointed members to the Statewide Communications Alliance of Nebraska (SCAN) to carry out the provisions of LB 1211. The SCAN Board recently completed a competitive process for choosing a consultant to assist the Board in its efforts. The scope of services is detailed in Section III, below.

Section 115 of LB 1 (2001 Special Session) appropriated \$1,500,000 to Program 240, Information Technology Projects, which is administered by the Chief Information Officer. The unstated intent for this appropriation is to support the goals for a statewide public safety wireless system. On October 31, 2001, the NITC approved a project plan submitted by the Division of Communications to cover the cost of developing a request for proposal and evaluating responses. Subject to reappropriation and available revenues, \$1,338,471.59 remains out of the original appropriation, which can be used for the wireless project.

Section 86-527 states that no contract or expenditure for the implementation of an enterprise project funded by the Information Technology Infrastructure Fund may be initiated, unless the NITC has approved a project plan.

Section III: Goals, Objectives, and Projected Outcomes

The scope of this project includes the following goals:

PHASE I – Analyze Project Progress to Date, Assess Needs vs. RFP Requirements and Vendor Responses, Revise Specifications to Match Needs, Request Revised Vendor Responses and Assist the SCAN Executive Board in Selecting a Vendor.

1. Review the work that has been done to date on the project, including the plan the RFP, the proposals received and other documents;
2. Provide independent, impartial expert analysis and information to the SCAN Executive Board on the following technical questions:
 - 2.1. Analyze state’s coverage requirements
 - 2.2. Analyze vendors’ coverage requirements
 - 2.3. Determine if an independent coverage analysis is needed
 - 2.4. Evaluate the RFP’s contractual section to determine adequacy
 - 2.5. Evaluate each proposal to determine if the vendors provided sufficient contractual protection to the State
 - 2.6. Define the advantages and disadvantages of P25
 - 2.7. Define the advantages and disadvantages of EDACS/OpenSky
 - 2.8. Provide the advantages and disadvantages of the VHF and 800 MHz frequency bands for trunked public safety radio systems
 - 2.9. Evaluate the use of third party tower/shelter/generator providers vs. third party towers with state provided shelters/generators
 - 2.10. Evaluate the feasibility of using existing systems in the statewide system
 - 2.11. Evaluation of the RFP mobile data requirements
 - 2.12. Evaluate each vendor’s proposal for voice and data use

**Project Proposal Form
FY2003-05 Biennium**

- 2.13. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a statewide phased implementation
- 2.14. Evaluate the near-term use of VoIP devices to provide interoperability
- 2.15. Prepare and present report for tasks 1 and 2
3. Assist the SCAN Executive Board in the formulation of an overall plan and strategy to develop, implement and finance a statewide public safety wireless network;
 - 3.1. Survey & interview prospective users to collect updated information
 - 3.2. Prepare questions or specifications to be submitted to the vendors to obtain a best & final offer (technical and price
 - 3.3. & 3.4 – Develop proposal evaluation criteria and evaluate vendor responses
 - 3.4. Analyze and make recommendations concerning cost-sharing and cost allocation issues
 - 3.5. Provide estimates of asset life for each category of asset to be acquired
 - 3.6. Analyze and make recommendations concerning tower/switch connectivity
 - 3.7. Analyze and make recommendations concerning system operation and maintenance services and regarding user training services.
4. Assist the SCAN Executive Board in the negotiation of a contract with the successful vendor;

PHASE II – Project Implementation and Acceptance Testing

5. Assist the SCAN Executive Board in the assessment of the successful vendor's performance. (Not part of this project plan.)

Section IV: Project Justification / Business Case

Law enforcement, fire, rescue efforts, other emergency response and Homeland Security all require effective wireless communications. When those systems do not work together, life and property are endangered. Through the Statewide Communications Alliance of Nebraska, state and local public safety agencies are striving to achieve a high level of interoperability and coverage. It is essential to achieve these goals, without massive change that would force agencies to abandon their existing investments in separate radio systems.

The complexity of wireless communications, the critical importance of this issue, and the potential magnitude of the project require expert assistance that can provide unbiased analysis and advice.

Section V: Technical Impact

This project plan does not include any expenditure on actual systems. The consultant will be asked to brief the Technical Panel of the NITC in order to assure coordination with other initiatives.

Section VI: Preliminary Plan for Implementation

SCAN Executive Board Selects Consultant February 27, 2003
Contract Signing
Project Start
Deliverable 1 (??)
Deliverable 2 (??)
Etc.

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Project completion (??)

Section VII: Risk Assessment

There is a major risk to the state, if nothing is done to address the need for interoperability and widespread coverage for wireless communications systems for public safety agencies.

Project Proposal Form
FY2003-05 Biennium

Section VIII: Financial Analysis and Budget

EXPENSES	FY 2003	FY 2004	Total
Salaries			
Benefits			
Consulting Expenses			\$250,000
Operating Expenses	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
Travel			
TOTAL	\$X	\$X	\$265,000
SOURCES OF FUNDING			
ITIF	\$X	\$X	\$265,000
TOTALS	\$X	\$X	\$265,000

Community Technology Fund Special Project Proposal

March 5, 2003

Project Name: Building Information Age Communities Planning Mini Grants Year 2

Sponsoring Entity: University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Technologies Across Nebraska, Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council

Amount Requested: \$20,000

Executive Summary

The University of Nebraska's Technologies Across Nebraska initiative, in partnership with the Nebraska Information Technology Commission's Community Council, is proposing an additional year of funding for the promising IT Planning and Mini Grant Program. The program assists communities and regional groups in conducting community information technology assessments and in developing technology plans to utilize information technology to enhance community and economic development. Initial program evaluations indicate that the Community IT Planning and Assessment Workbook developed for the program is a useful resource. The Community IT Planning and Mini Grant program has energized local technology committees and focused their efforts. The 8 participating communities and regional groups in year one of the program are expected to have technology plans completed by May 2003.

Funding the program for a second year will allow Technologies Across Nebraska to build upon the lessons learned from year one and expand the program to eight additional communities or regional groups. The \$20,000 requested will provide the 8 community or regional groups participating in year two of the program with up to \$2,500 in funding for conducting community surveys or other planning related activities.

Project Description

The Community IT Planning and Mini Grant program provides assistance in conducting community or regional information technology assessments and in developing technology plans. The eight communities and regional groups currently participating in year one of the program are Alliance; Brown, Keya Paha and Rock Counties; Custer County; Crawford-Harrison; Edgar; Fillmore County; West Point; and York County. The communities participating range in population from 8,959 (Alliance) to 279 (Harrison) and are geographically dispersed across the state.

The participating community and regional groups are piloting the *Community IT Planning and Assessment Workbook*. Participating in the program has energized local technology committees and focused their efforts. Initial reactions to the workbook have been positive. At the suggestion of one of the participating regional groups, a sample plan

was developed. Most community and regional groups are in the process of completing their initial assessments. Updates on the activities of the participating community and regional groups are available at <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/toolkit/pilot/index.htm>.

The Crawford-Harrison regional group provides an example of the progress being made by the participating groups. The communities of Crawford and Harrison focused initial efforts on the preparation of a grant application for the RUS Community Connect broadband program. A community survey was also done to determine technology usage, the demand for broadband services, and interest in training opportunities. Results from the survey indicate that technology use is high among area residents. Only four out of 159 respondents reported not owning a computer. Fewer than 16 of the respondents reported having no Internet connection. Approximately 120 of the respondents have a dial-up modem connection. There is strong interest in training--especially for e-commerce training. Approximately 60 respondents indicated that they would be interested in e-commerce training. About 35 respondents indicated that they would be interested in basic Internet training. The survey and the results are available from the project Web site.

The Crawford-Harrison group is currently working on developing a technology plan for the area.

Funding the program for a second year will allow Technologies Across Nebraska and the NITC Community Council to build upon the lessons learned from year 1 and expand the program to eight additional communities or regional groups. The mini grant program will provide eight additional Nebraska communities or regional groups with up to \$2,500 in funding for conducting community assessments or other activities which support the development of community or regional plans to utilize information technology to enhance community and economic development. At a recent conference call, participants indicated that the availability of the \$2,500 provided an incentive to organize a technology committee and to focus efforts on technology assessment and planning.

Year 2 Project Goal:

Building leadership capacity in Nebraska's rural communities to address IT development.

Year 2 Project Activities and Timeline

April

- Form selection committee.
- Develop guidelines and application form.

May-July

- Publicize availability of the planning mini grants.
- Update toolkit materials based upon final evaluation of year one participants.

August

- Select and announce the 8 community or regional groups selected to participate in year 2 of the program.

September-October

- Hold an initial meeting with each participating community or regional group to introduce them to the Community IT Planning and Assessment Workbook and to begin the assessment process.

November - May

- Work with communities to develop IT plans. Communities will be required to submit a written work plan and budget in order to receive mini planning grant funds.
- Evaluate toolkit materials. If necessary, revisions to toolkit materials will be made.

May

- Conduct regional focus groups to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the toolkit materials and the planning process and to solicit suggestions.

Expected Outcomes, Project Deliverables, and Evaluation Data Collection

Project Outcome: Eight communities or regional groups will develop IT plans.

Quantitative Data Collection: The number of communities or regional groups participating in the planning process and the number of communities or regional groups completing IT plans will be reported.

Project Deliverable: Local IT plans and any materials developed will be made available on the Community IT Toolkit Web site.

Project Outcome: Development of additional toolkit materials and/or revisions to toolkit materials which can be used to help other communities.

Project Deliverable: A report summarizing the project and lessons learned will be written and made available from the Community IT Toolkit Web site. Any other materials developed or revised will be made available from the Community IT Toolkit Web site. In the project's final report, these materials will be listed with links to their location on the Web site.

Project Outcome: Community leaders will be better prepared to address IT-related community and development

Quantitative Data Collection: Community leaders will be asked to fill out a brief survey indicating their satisfaction with the process and how the process has impacted their ability to address IT-related development.

Qualitative Data Collection: Regional focus groups will be conducted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the toolkit materials and the planning process and to solicit suggestions.

Project Deliverable: A report summarizing the project and lessons learned will be written and made available from the Community IT Toolkit Web site.

Project Outcome: Nebraska's communities will begin to utilize information technology in ways that enhance community and economic development.

This expected outcome will probably not be realized until after the one-year time limit of this grant. However, every effort will be made to follow-up with the communities to document the ways in which information technology is being used to enhance community and economic development.

Budget

\$20,000 for eight \$2,500 mini grants.

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, seeking to investigate the current status of distance learning in Nebraska.) Application No. C-2874 / PI-71)))

COMMENTS OF THE TECHNICAL PANEL OF THE NEBRASKA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION

On February 4, 2003, the Nebraska Public Service Commission initiated this investigation into the current status of distance learning in Nebraska. Although the investigation is in response to complaints about delays in providing distance learning at several schools, the order raises broader questions about whether the infrastructure for distance learning is adequate, what technology should be used, issues pertaining to interconnecting networks, and future needs. The Technical Panel of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission (NITC) is working on many of these same issues.

The Legislature created the NITC for the purpose of providing “a statewide vision and strategy ... to ensure coordinated development of the telecommunications infrastructure necessary for Nebraska to keep pace worldwide...” (Section 86-512). State statute also directs the NITC to “coordinate the state’s investment in information technology...” (Section 86-513), and “to adopt minimum technical standards, guidelines, and architectures...” (Section 86-516). The Technical Panel of the NITC is responsible for recommending technical standards and guidelines and for reviewing selected technology projects.

Several activities of the NITC and the Technical Panel are directly relevant to the current investigation of the PSC.

Video and Audio Standards for Distance Learning

On January 8, 2002, the NITC adopted the “Video and Audio Compression Standard for Synchronous Distance Learning and Video Conferencing.” A copy of this standard and related information is available at: <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/standards/index.html>. This standard was the product of a yearlong effort by a broad-based group to evaluate different technologies. The Technical Panel followed an open process in developing the standards and held a public hearing on the proposed standard prior to recommending the standard to the NITC. Criteria for selecting a standard included cost, bandwidth, connectivity, and compatibility. The purpose of the standard is to “establish video and

audio standards that will enable all existing and future synchronous distance learning and video conferencing facilities in Nebraska to achieve interoperability and an acceptable quality of service.”

Based on the recommendation of the Technical Panel, the NITC adopted MPEG-2 and H.263 video with G.722 audio as the standards in Nebraska. MPEG-2 is for applications that require high bandwidth video or “full motion video” with expected data rates of 1.5 Mbps or higher. H.263 video is for low data rate video applications with expected data rates less than 1.5 Mbps. The NITC also addressed the problem of implementation. The adopted standard tries to avoid the need for many gateways in the system by recommending that each distance-learning consortium should upgrade as a group when their current contracts for distance learning services expire. “All new sites that install interactive distance learning facilities prior to that date should adopt the current technology used by the consortium they will join.” This clause has the effect of “grandfathering” JPEG technology until expiration of existing contracts. Availability of JPEG technology was discussed during development of this policy. Information from several sources indicated that JPEG equipment could be purchased in the after-sales market as other states migrated to newer technologies.

The Technical Panel plans to conduct a review of the video and audio standard prior to January 2004.

Nebraska Network Feasibility Study and Recommendations

The NITC established the Nebraska Network Work Group in February 2002 “to evaluate the feasibility of the development of a digital network and related support functions to serve education, communities, and state government that could be accomplished through a statewide consortium.” Membership on the work group included representatives of higher education, K-12 schools, Education Service Units (ESUs), telehealth providers, libraries, local government, state government and the NITC Technical Panel. Agendas, minutes, and supporting material are available on the website for the work group: <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/nitc/network/>.

The workgroup studied the existing distance learning networks and other video networks. As a general observation, the workgroup noted the “lack of interconnectivity and interoperability” of video networks. Lack of market power when negotiating services was also identified as a problem.

On September 16, 2002, the NITC adopted the final report of the Nebraska Network Workgroup, including the following recommendation:

“12. The Technical Panel, as a continued extension of its video standards activity, should establish an implementation work group to determine how to provide a Nebraska Statewide Synchronous Video Network. The network should incorporate the facilities of K-12 interactive distance learning consortia, higher education, telehealth, National Guard video network, and the Nebraska

Video Conferencing Network (NVCN). The work group should include representation of the Community Council, Education Council, State Government Council and affected entities. It should define the technical requirements for interconnecting all synchronous video networks and meeting the scheduling needs of different participants. Issues to be addressed should include business case, scheduling, traffic prioritization, security, quality assurance, cost sharing, and existing contractual arrangements of regional networks. Specific steps might include:

- a. Create a working group to continue the activities of the Video Standards Work Group to prepare an implementation plan for adherence to the new video/audio standards;
- b. Conduct informative and working sessions to determine the needs, issues, and participants regarding interoperability within and outside the state;
- c. Encourage participants to improve educational opportunities in the state via continued evolving video distance education;
- d. Identify a “core sponsor” for video distance education in the state that will be the focal point to coordinate all of the activities associated with enhancement of services and interrelationships that will be critical for continued success;
- e. Evaluate options for providing support services.”

At its November 2002 meeting, the Technical Panel adopted a charter for the Statewide Video Synchronous Video Work Group. Members have been identified and the workgroup will begin meeting soon.

On December 16 and 18, 2002 and January 30 and 31, 2003, distance-learning providers from across the State hosted technology demonstrations that showed the attributes of the two video standards, H.263 and MPEG-2. The demonstrations were well attended by users from the K-12 and Higher Education communities. Perhaps the most striking comment from the audience at the H.263 demonstrations was their increased confidence that the low bandwidth video standard may be suitable for normal distance learning exchange. This would represent a change in perspectives compared to the testing and findings of the Video Standards Work Group in January 2002. Due to the development of new CODECs by classroom integration companies, the H.263 video standard may be a scalable retrofit or upgrade for the outmoded JPEG video installations.

The Statewide Synchronous Video Work Group plans to develop recommendations over the next 12-18 months to overcome the technical and non-technical challenges to developing a statewide synchronous video network to serve both educational and non-educational entities. Issues include:

- Upgrade plans for existing distance learning and other synchronous video networks;
- Interconnectivity;
- Operational support for a shared network, including scheduling;
- Technical options and support from telecommunications providers.

Staff of the NITC is also involved in working with representatives of several telehealth initiatives to achieve a statewide interoperable telehealth system.

Conclusion

The NITC has a strong interest and a history of involvement in the issue of statewide synchronous video networks.

Although the preponderance of interest in synchronous video networks is for distance learning applications, the need for a statewide system transcends the education sector. Many aspects of telehealth involve the same technology as distance learning systems. So do videoconferencing and training needs of state agencies. Homeland security officials could use a statewide synchronous video network to connect with a wide range of individuals for training and other purposes. Achieving maximum value of the taxpayer's investment in these systems will require interoperability, with the ability to connect one or more sites to any combination of other sites in the state or outside Nebraska.

Accomplishing the goal of a statewide, interoperable synchronous video system will require collaboration of participants and telecommunications providers.

Dated this ____ day of March 2003.

TECHNICAL PANEL
NEBRASKA INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION

By: _____

Walter Weir, Chair
(Address)